ISSN 0712-7774

CEREBUS

mothers & daughters

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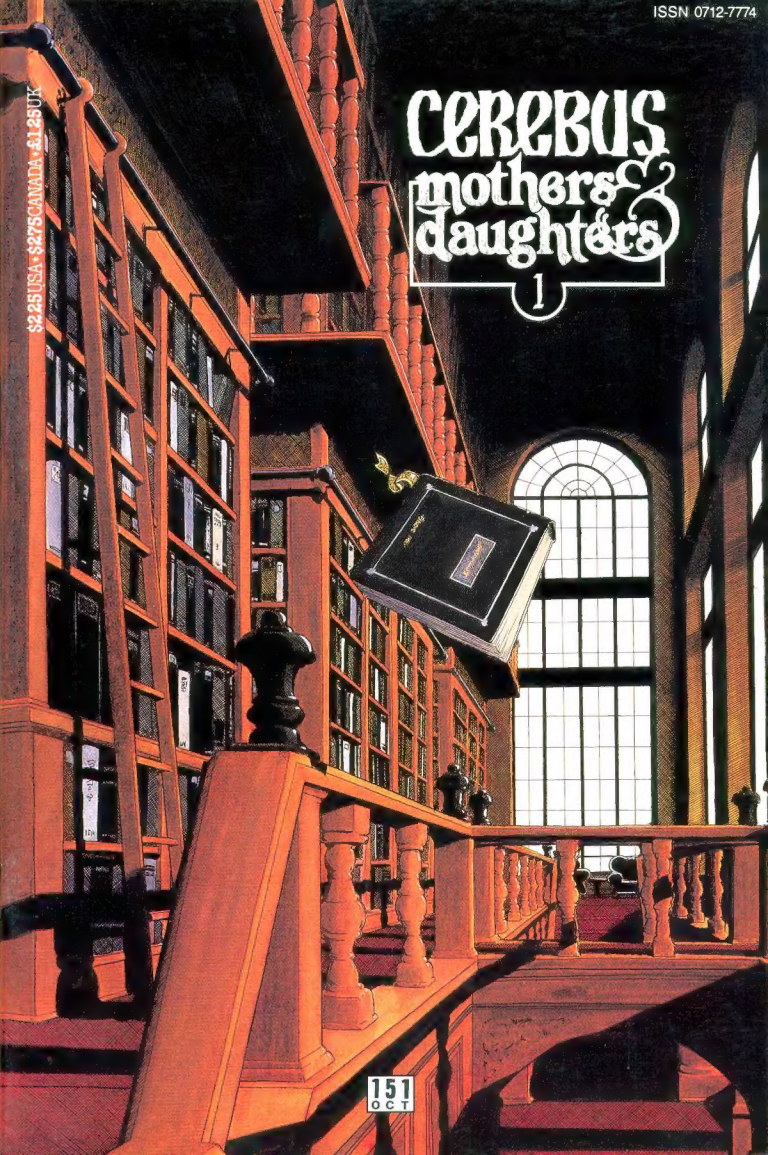
$2.25USA • $2.75CANADA • £1.25UK



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OCT.

NOTE • FROM • THE PRESIDENT

Here it is . . . the first ever Note from the President finished *after* I finished the issue; September 24. The reason being that this is the end of the first month of planning for the 1992 US Tour and everything's been changing so fast that I wrote this thing about a dozen times around Labour Day. Finally I just decided to leave it until a few elements of the Tour were set, so I didn't have to keep changing the information up to the last minute.

★★★★★★★★★★

The tour is in association with Fred Greenberg's *Great Eastern Conventions;* the phone number is on the back cover. The first seven dates have been confirmed; each date represents a one day Sunday convention. January 19 in San Francisco, in association with *Comix Experience* and *Comic Relief* . . . February 2 in Boston, Mass. in association with *Million-Year Picnic,* featuring special guest Michael Zulli with a display of artwork from the *Sweeny Todd* graphic novel he is currently at work on, written by Neil Gaiman (soon to be serialized in *Taboo*) . . . Pittsburgh, Pa. on February 23 . . . St. Louis, Missouri on March 8 . . . Los Angeles California on March 22 (in connection with the show, I will be a guest of Mr. Joe Straczynski, co-producer of *Murder, She Wrote* and *Cerebus* fan on the radio program *Hour 25*—thanks, Harlan, thanks, Joe—Friday, March 20) . . . Denver, Colorado on April 12 . . . and Chicago, Illinois on April 26. I don't have the names of the Hotels to go with this information, but I'll try to have them for next time.

★★★★★★★★★★

I'm looking for stores which specialize in independent comics to co-sponsor the tour in a number of the cities listed. In exchange for helping out with the travel expenses and writing a cover letter on store stationery to be included with the press kit (which will be sent to newspaper, radio and TV stations in your area), we will be providing you with as much Cerebus material as you can comfortably handle for two months leading up to the appearance. In addition, I will make a personal appearance in your store on the Friday or Saturday before the show and you will get a free half page ad in *Cerebus* and *Cerebus Bi-weekly.* There's usually only one *Comix Experience* or *Comic Relief* or *Beguiling* in any major centre (*if that*). You know who you are; we'd love to hear from you. In the press kit cover letter, you should include the name of a media contact person (either yourself or an eloquent employee) willing to answer questions about independent comics specifically and the Direct Market in general.

★★★★★★★★★★

As part of each convention, I will be showing the Home Video of the "Making of 104", the Cerebus/Flaming Carrot cross-over produced in ten, hectic days by myself, Bob Burden, Gerhard and Roxanne Starr, which hasn't been seen since Mid-Ohio Con in 1987. There will also be a display of Cerebus original artwork (as many pages and covers as can be squeezed into the display space Fred has generously offered). Cerebus merchandise (including Diamondback decks which will ONLY be offered for sale at the Con. Depending on the reaction, we might solicit the distributors at a future date, but for all those people who have written wondering where they can get a deck or two, here's the only *guaranteed* outlet). I'll be trying to sign as many Cerebus books as possible. We might have to limit the number of autographs, depending on the turn-out (to five, probably), but I do promise a Cerebus head-sketch (free!) in every reprint volume/phone book.

★★★★★★★★★★

I will also be auctioning a number of Cerebus original pages (the first time I've offered artwork for sale in five years) to benefit the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund at each stop on the tour. I've also made a few calls to friends of the artistic persuasion to get them to contribute artwork of their own (as well as jamming on an original Cerebus piece if they're so disposed) for a benefit auction.

★★★★★★★★★★

There are a lot of other things still in the planning stages at this point that I can't get into. What Fred and I both need at this point is local media information. We have printed lists of newspapers, radio and TV stations for each place, but what we need is feedback from you guys (yes, YOU guys) about the local media outlets. You know what papers, what columnists, what radio stations, what alternative papers would most likely be interested in doing an item about Cerebus or an interview. Great Eastern is well-equipped to handle the actual contacts and follow-up with the outlets involved (with their very own media person specialist type type), what we need are names, addresses and phone numbers on a "do not miss" list. The most thorough "media analysis" for each city wins . . . something. I don't know; an original page, a complete set of reprint volumes. We'll work something out; trust me.

★★★★★★★★★★

Gerhard will be at some of the stops on the tour. At this point it might be every other one; maybe fewer, maybe more. He only gets to see his girl-friend, Rose, on the weekends and listening to people talk about comic books for longer than half an hour turns his brain to cream cheese. Between those two things, every other show might be pushing it. We'll see how things develop.

★★★★★★★★★★

Bob Chapman at Graphitti Designs will be making most of the Cerebus t-shirts available again in time for the tour, including *Cerebus for Dictator, He Doesn't Love You, He Just Wants All Your Money, I Survived Jaka's Story,* and a special *1992 US Tour* Shirt. Maybe even a couple of those neat enamel pins that he does. We've even talked about doing some Cerebus Beer Steins, but that might be a little ambitious. Yeah, right, as if the whole tour *isn't* . . .

★★★★★★★★★★

I'm looking forward to seeing all you guys. How about sending in a list of people for "Cerebus Fan Guest of Honour". Definitely Connie Lingus for the New York stop, eh?

★★★★★★★★★★

And just so the Canadian/Quebecois fans don't feel completely left out, I'll be at the *Imaginary Worlds* booth at the big Book Fair/Salon in Montreal November 16 from 11:00 to 3:00, signing autographs, selling reprint volumes and doing free Cerebus sketches. It's at the Place Bonaventure Metro Station, Place Bonaventure, Montreal. For details you can call Claude Lalumiere at *Librairie Nebula* at 514-932-3930 or write him at 1452 St. Mathieu, Montreal, Quebec H3H 2H9.

★★★★★★★★★★

Just in, as of September 25; the sponsoring store in Minneapolis will be *Dreamhaven Books and Comics.*

CEREBUS

NO. 151 OCTOBER 1991

DAVE SIM
President

GERHARD
Vice-President

LINDA BERZINS
Typesetting

CEREBUS IS PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY AARDVARK-VANAHEIM INC. P.O. BOX 1674 STN. C KITCHENER ONTARIO CANADA N2G 4R2 ALL CONTENTS © 1991 DAVE SIM. PRINTED IN CANADA BY **PRENEY PRINT & LITHO INC.**, WINDSOR, ONTARIO.

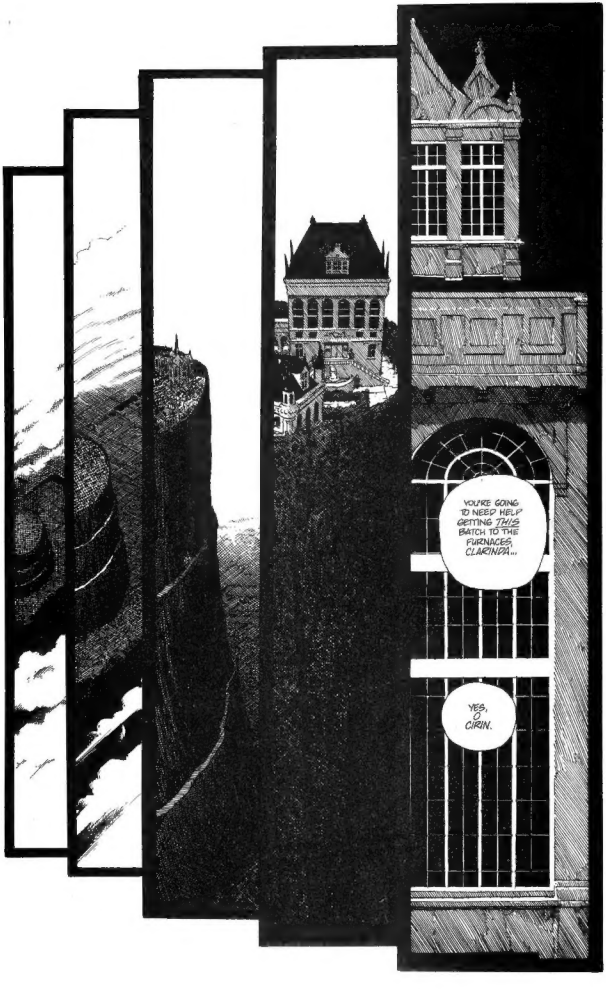
PRINTED IN CANADA

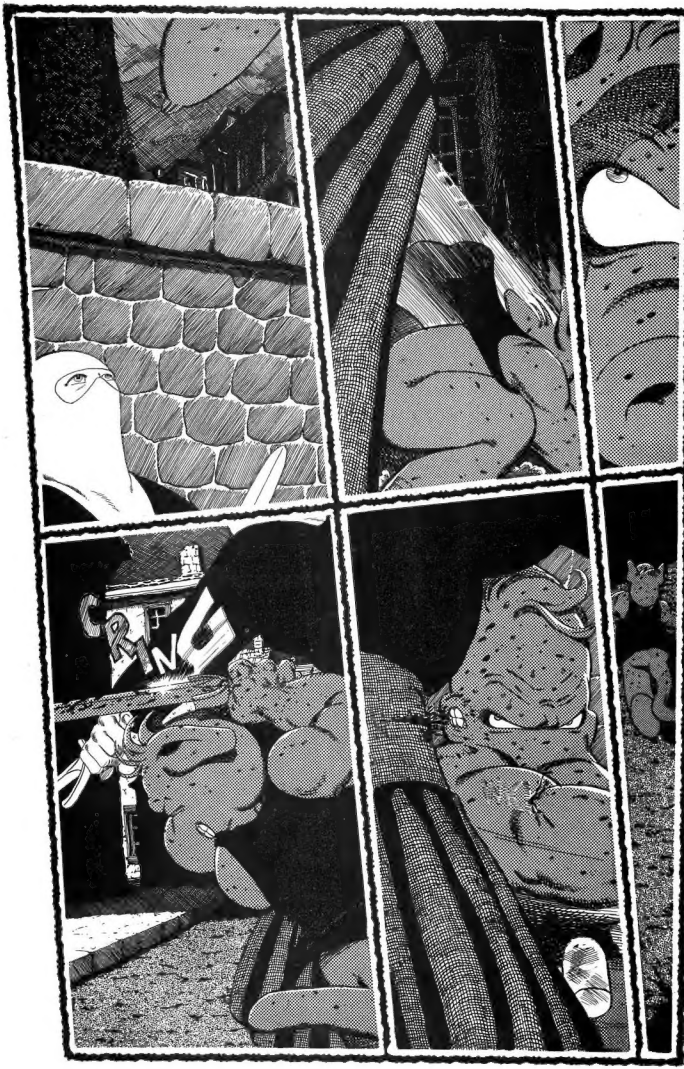
I am a stag; *of seven tines*
I am a flood; *across a plain*
I am a wind; *on a deep lake*
I am a tear; *the Sun lets fall*
I am a hawk; *above the cliff*
I am a thorn; *beneath the nail*
I am a wonder; *among flowers*
I am a wizard; *who but I*
Sets the cool head aflame with smoke?

I am a spear; *that roars for blood*
I am a salmon; *in a pool*
I am a lure; *from paradise*
I am a hill; *where poets walk*
I am a boar; *ruthless and red*
I am a breaker; *threatening doom*
I am a tide; *that drags to death*
I am an infant; *who but I*
peeps from the unhewn dolmen arch?

I am the womb *of every holt*
I am the blaze *on every hill*
I am the queen *of every hive*
I am the shield *for every head*
I am the tomb *of every hope*

mothers & daughters

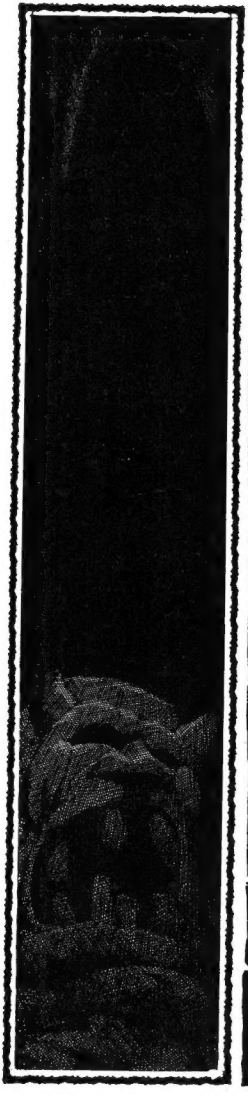

YOU'RE GOING TO NEED HELP GETTING THIS BATCH TO THE FURNACES, CLARINDA...
YES, O CIRIN.


CRING

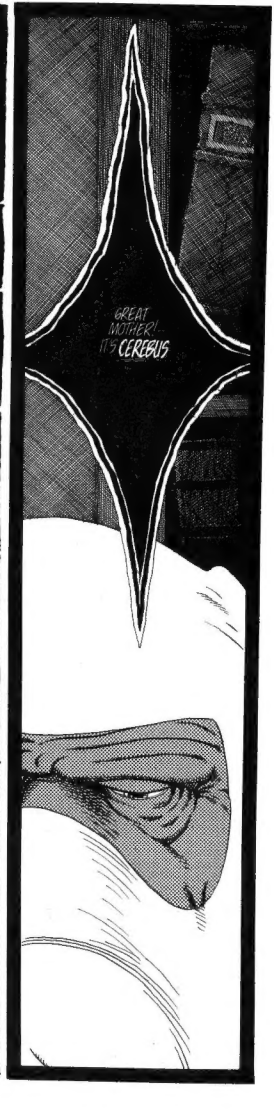
At that moment, beneath a snow-ravaged ravine in far-off Tansubal, the ancient demon, Khem, is the first to feel the coming of the Great Change even as Cirin purges the Papal Library of unwanted works.

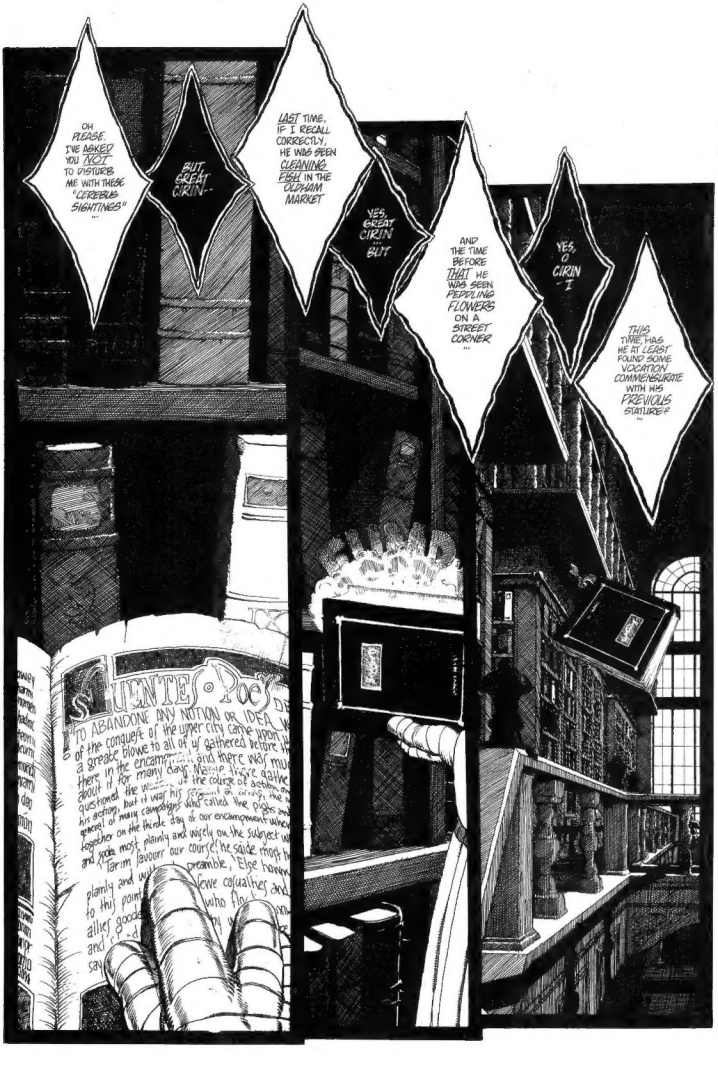
Khem's mystic spell was long-broken. It was alone, its captured souls long-departed into the icy skies above a land where winter was eternal and remorseless. No longer did the drained, animated remains of its victims carve hideous representations of the Demon in the soft outcroppings of rock which formed its labyrinthine domain.

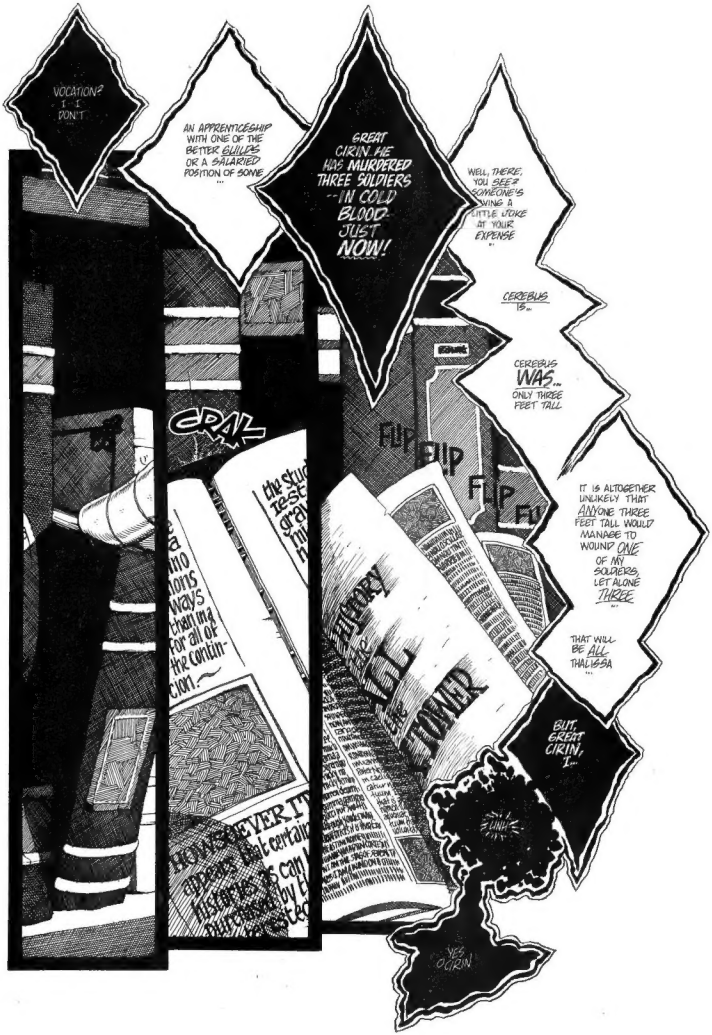
Without its spell; without the ability to draw life to it; to drain that life of its vitality and to enslave it, Khem had no purpose; no reason for existence. That awareness dawned, in that moment, in the core of the demon's consciousness and that awareness was black and terrible; like a vacuum so irresistible that Khem's very existence was drawn to it; turning inward upon itself; curling and swirling and disappearing like thin milk into the folds of some vortex; some whirlpool; of icy, dark water.



Soon, the silence of that underground cavern was absolute, save for a sound not heard since the fateful day when Cerebus had come to this stygian sanctuary; very faintly, but quite unmistakably, there was the sound of deep and sardonic laughter.



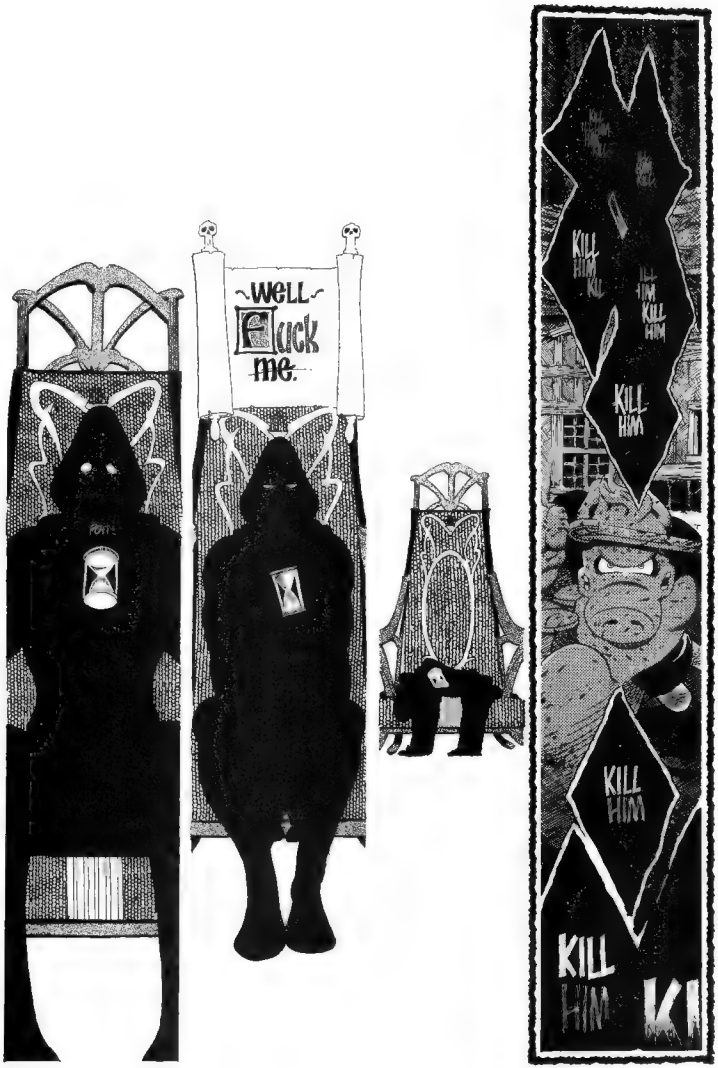

OH PLEASE. I'VE ASKED YOU NOT TO DISTURB ME WITH THESE "CEREBUS SIGHTINGS"
BUT, GREAT CIRIN--
LAST TIME, IF I RECALL CORRECTLY, HE WAS SEEN CLEANING FISH IN THE OLDHAM MARKET
YES, GREAT CIRIN -- BUT
AND THE TIME BEFORE THAT HE WAS SEEN PEDDLING FLOWERS ON A STREET CORNER
YES, O CIRIN -- I
THIS TIME, HAS HE AT LEAST FOUND SOME VOCATION COMMENSURATE WITH HIS PREVIOUS STATURE?


VOCATION? I-I DON'T
AN APPRENTICESHIP WITH ONE OF THE BETTER GUILDS OR A SALARIED POSITION OF SOME ...
GREAT CIRIN. HE HAS MURDERED THREE SOLDIERS --IN COLD BLOOD-- JUST NOW!
WELL, THERE, YOU SEE? SOMEONE'S SWING A LITTLE JOKE AT YOUR EXPENSE ...
CEREBUS IS...
CEREBUS WAS... ONLY THREE FEET TALL
IT IS ALTOGETHER UNLIKELY THAT ANYONE THREE FEET TALL WOULD MANAGE TO WOUND ONE OF MY SOLDIERS, LET ALONE THREE ...
THAT WILL BE ALL THALISSA ...
BUT, GREAT CIRIN, I...
YES O CIRIN
CRAK
FLIP
FLIP
FLIP
FLIP
HOWSOEVER IT
TOWER

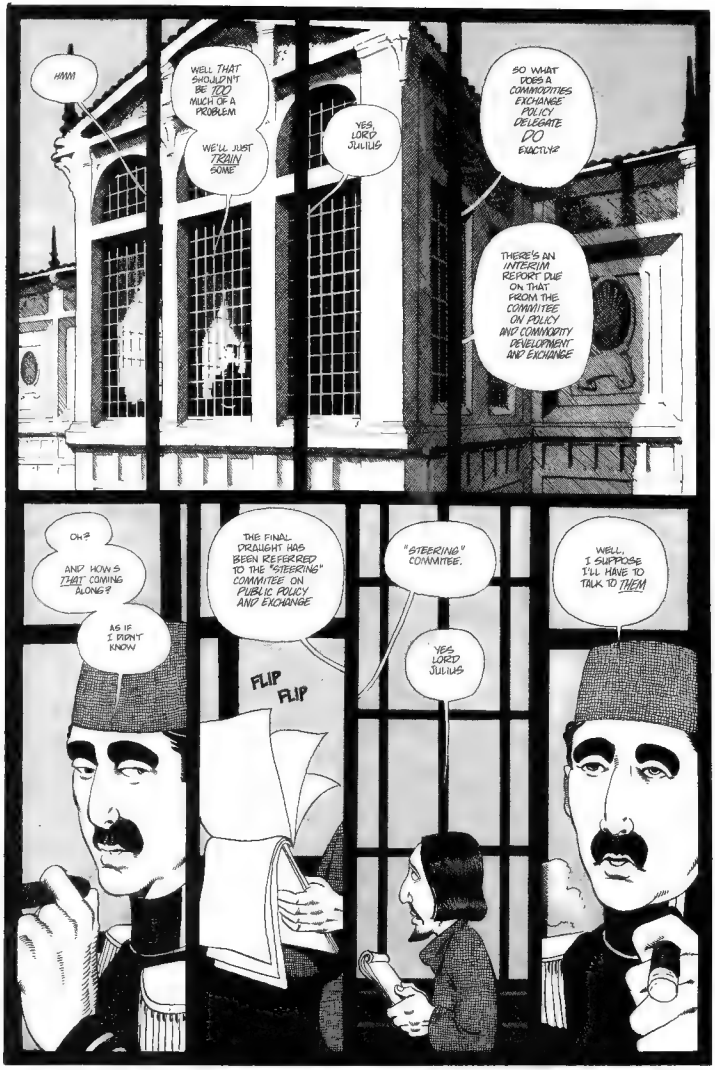
AT an altogether different location, death sits, contemplating his rôle in the larger scheme of existence
~when suddenly

YOU ARE NOT DEATH
YOU BEGAN AS A DEMON OF A MOUSE-FRATERNITY IN PRE SERPAN TOTEMISTIC ESTARCION. YOU GRADUALLY ROSE IN DIVINE RANK BY FORCE OF ARMS, BLACKMAIL AND FRAUD UNTIL YOU BECAME THE PATRON OF MUSIC, POETRY AND THE ARTS AND FINALLY (IN SOME REGIONS AT LEAST) YOU OUSTED YOUR 'FATHER' TARIM FROM THE SOVEREIGNTY OF THE MULTIVERSE BY IDENTIFYING YOURSELF WITH BELINUS, THE INTELLECTUAL GOD OF LIGHT
AS HAPPENS SO OFTEN WITH AN ADVANCEMENT BY NEFARIOUS MEANS, YOU SOON FOUND YOURSELF A VICTIM OF PROFOUND FEELINGS OF PERSECUTION AND WERE SOON SURROUNDED BY ENTITIES WHO SOUGHT TO EXPLOIT THOSE FEARS AND ANXIETIES... OMNIPOTENT AND OMNIPRESENT YOU USED YOUR POWER TO FORGE A NEW IDENTITY FOR YOURSELF. DEATH
WHICH PERMITTED YOU TO VIEW THE VARIOUS FORMS OF WIDE-SCALE CARNAGE AND DESTRUCTION PERPETRATED BY YOUR MORTAL CHILDREN AGAINST THEMSELVES AND EACH OTHER AS A KIND OF PERSONAL TRIUMPH INSTEAD OF A FAILURE AND ABDICATION OF WILL AND INFLUENCE OVER THE MANY WORLDS WITHIN WORLDS YOU FALSELY INHERITED..
HOWEVER!
YOU KNEW THAT AS AN OMNIPOTENT BEING, THE DECEPTION OF THIS NEW IDENTITY WOULD EXTEND (INEVITABLY) TO YOURSELF AND SO YOU CREATED ME..

AND PLANTED THE AWARENESS OF YOUR TRUE IDENTITY IN MY MIND AND TOLD ME ONLY TO REVEAL IT TO YOU IN THE EVENT OF THE APOCALYPSE ARRIVING.
THE APOCALYPSE IS NOT ARRIVING (NOT YET ANYWAY), BUT THE TWELVE GEMS SURROUNDING YOU (WHICH AREN'T GEMS AT ALL, BUT LARGE, POWERFUL DISGUISED SUCCUBI) HAVE BEEN DRAINING YOUR STRENGTH AND LIFE ESSENCE FOR THE SEVEN THOUSAND AND SEVEN YEARS, FOUR MONTHS AND EIGHT DAYS SINCE YOU ASCENDED TO THE THRONE OF HEAVEN. SO EFFECTIVE HAVE THEY BEEN THAT YOU HAVE MERE SECONDS LEFT TO YOU...
...AFTER WHICH YOU WILL CEASE TO EXIST AND ALL THAT WILL REMAIN IS A SMALL PILE OF BLACK ROBES AND A LOP-SIDED HOUR-GLASS
ABSOLUTELY NOTHING CAN IMPEDE YOUR IMMINENT DEMISE. THE TWELVE 'GEMS' WILL DISPERSE AT YOUR PASSING AND, SINCE YOU HAVE DONE NOTHING BUT GLOAT OVER DEATH FOR THE LAST FIVE THOUSAND YEARS, NO VOID WILL BE CREATED WHEN YOU GO. IN THE GREAT HIERARCHY OF REALITIES STRETCHING UP TO AND BEYOND -- THE NEARLY LIMITLESS BOUNDARIES OF THE IMAGINATION, YOU WILL BE LONG NOTED AS THE LEAST PRODUCTIVE AND MOST POWERFUL BEING EVER TO HAVE EXISTED.
IT'S NOT MUCH OF A LEGACY, I ADMIT...
BUT IT IS AT LEAST SOMETHING


well
fuck
me.
KILL HIM
KILL HIM
KILL HIM
KILL HIM
KILL HIM

WHAT DOES SHE MEAN SHE REFUSES TO MEET WITH MY COMMODITIES EXCHANGE POLICY DELEGATION?
THEIR RULE IS VERY STRICT LORD JULIUS
NO INTERACTION WITH ANY TRADE GROUP WITH LESS THAN FIFTY PER CENT FEMALE REPRESENTATION
FIFTY PER CENT, EH?
YES, LORD JULIUS
HOW MANY FEMALE COMMODITIES EXCHANGE DELEGATES DO WE HAVE?
NONE, LORD JULIUS


HMM
WELL THAT SHOULDN'T BE TOO MUCH OF A PROBLEM
WE'LL JUST TRAIN SOME
YES, LORD JULIUS
SO WHAT DOES A COMMODITIES EXCHANGE POLICY DELEGATE DO EXACTLY?
THERE'S AN INTERIM REPORT DUE ON THAT FROM THE COMMITTEE ON POLICY AND COMMODITY DEVELOPMENT AND EXCHANGE
OH?
AND HOW'S THAT COMING ALONG?
AS IF I DIDN'T KNOW
THE FINAL DRAUGHT HAS BEEN REFERRED TO THE "STEERING" COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC POLICY AND EXCHANGE
FLIP
FLIP
"STEERING" COMMITTEE.
YES, LORD JULIUS
WELL, I SUPPOSE I'LL HAVE TO TALK TO THEM

HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE THERE ON THE "STEERING" COMMITEE?
SEVENTY-TWO, LORD JULIUS
SEVENTY-TWO PEOPLE ON THE "STEERING" COMMITEE ?
YES, LORD JULIUS.
TAKE A LETTER; TO THE CHAIR OF THE "STEERING" COMMITEE
"DEAR CHAIR"
"I HAVE JUST BEEN INFORMED THAT SEVENTY TWO PEOPLE SERVE UNDER YOU ON THE "STEERING" COMMITEE ON PUBLIC POLICY AND EXCHANGE"
"IT IS MY CONSIDERED OPINION THAT SEVENTY-TWO PEOPLE UNDER A CHAIR VIOLATES SEVERAL ARTICLES OF THE PALMAN FIRE CODE."
"NOT TO MENTION THE HEALTH AND SAFETY CHARTER OF WOB AND MOST PEOPLE'S IDEA OF A GOOD TIME"

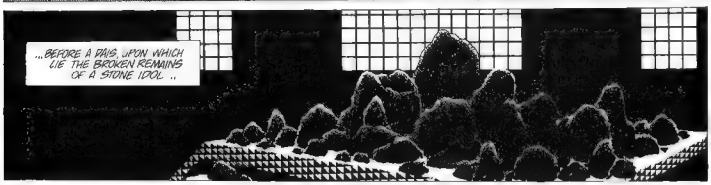
"THEREFORE I AM INSTRUCTING YOU THAT AS OF THIS DATE, ALL MEMBERS SERVING ON THE "STEERING" COMMITTEE (WITH THE EXCEPTION OF YOURSELF) ARE TO HAVE THEIR TENURE REVOKED"

"YOU MAY INFORM THE MEMBERS OF THIS AND ACROSS THEM THAT THERE ARE (ODDLY ENOUGH) SEVENTY-ONE POSITIONS CURRENTLY AVAILABLE ON THE NEWLY-FORMED "EVERYBODY GET OUT AND PUSH" COMMITTEE

"YOURS VERY SINCERELY" ETCETERA ETCETERA

..BENEATH THE RED MARCHES.

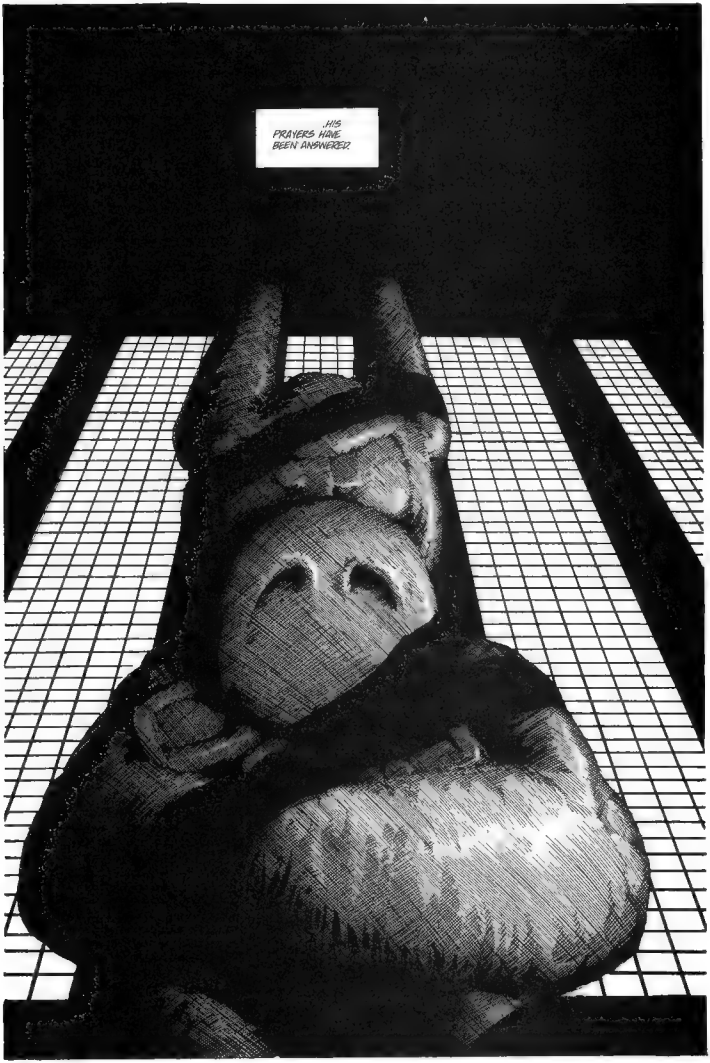
.. IN AN ANCIENT THEATRE...


...BEFORE A DAIS, UPON WHICH LIE THE BROKEN REMAINS OF A STONE IDOL ..

A MAN HAS BEEN PRAYING FOR MANY HOURS.

AT LAST HE RAISES HIMSELF UP

...AND DISCOVERS...


HIS PRAYERS HAVE BEEN ANSWERED!

AARDVARK COMMENT

P.O. BOX 1674, STATION 'C', KITCHENER, ONTARIO N2G 4R2

Mr. Sim,

As one of your greatest admirers, let me congratulate you on the evolution of your comic. *Cerebus* has kept on evolving to the point of becoming "boring" to most. I for one am happy of that continuous change. *Cerebus* has never disappointed me and you can be assured of my continuous support whatever direction this comic takes.

I write to underline certain points, I will state them clearly.

I am a French Canadian and also a Quebecois. That is my heritage. As most readers do not know, Canada has an official bilingual status. In reality, the North American Continent is largely English speaking. The only useful language in Canada should be English to my dismay.

We speak French, in an English society. In any public relations job you need to be bilingual here in Québec. Most of the culture coming in is English. Translating something like *Cerebus* is unthinkable. Why wait 6 months for a translation when the product is there in English? So, we get drowned by English. We also receive the European culture but overseas costs make this culture much more expensive. A book in french is often twice the price of its English counterpart.

As you can see, Quebec does possess the fundamental elements for true bilingualism; the rest of Canada does not. What Dave said is to my shame true; people here in Québec are starting a hatred campaign toward the English part of Canada. I am a séparatist (or someone in favour of the independence of Québec) but let me explain my point of view.

Québec is bilingual, and it costs a lot of money to keep the balance. Canada should redefine its status "Unilingual with a bilingual province". Why translate 100% of official papers when only 10% is necessary? I think Canada should pay for our translation costs because each province has something unique that the rest of Canada should take care of. Some provinces have a high percentage of welfare recipients and it is our responsibility to pay for it. A new redefined federalism is what I want. I am proud to be Canadian and hope that a solution can be found very soon.

What scares me is what our working class thinks. They have changed the issue to racism toward the English part of Canada (often including the English speaking part of Quebec). I see why Canadians are afraid and hope that the situation gets resolved before some ass-hole picks up a weapon!

I congratulate your effort to print things from different artists. Paying for your single page is a blessing to most. So I congratulate you on your social effort to help the comic industry.

Many years ago, when I first started to read *Cerebus,* I was told by many that you were a . . . well . . . you understand. My reply was that idolizing the man and not the work did create monsters, if monster he was. Stardom will boost anyone's ego to the highest of levels. You seem to have found a bit of humility back. I do enjoy the pictures on the back cover but I suggest you remove them. There are many more useful things that can be put there. Give free space to underground advertising, insert a poem, a picture of a painting. I am sure Monique can think of something to do with this colour!

It was written that before dying, Oscar Wilde said: I dreamt I was dancing with the dead.

I know you like the man but you don't have to feel guilty about your work. To me it looks like throughout *Jaka's Story,* people were complaining that *Cerebus* was absent. You didn't want to tell all that you had another story about Oscar, so you stalled. Again, let me tell you it is great. Your point is taken. I think I understand it and know people will be disappointed by the ending of *Melmoth.*

Your point: Death is portrayed as a phase in modern comics. We are all afraid of death to the point of escaping anything that looks too real to us. The painful death of a cancer victim close to us does give Melmoth it's true meaning. Melmoth is not a story, it is a fact. Just a point being made about a fact of life we all take for granted. I see in Melmoth Death as it scares me, I hate to read it but I must accept what it means. It won't go away by turning my head.

If the ending is as I predict (and it never is!) nothing will happen and every reader will be disappointed but me.

I wanted to know what was on top of the "Hot" debate going on right now in your letter column. Human stupidity is! I was once explained by a German that they are still being held responsible for the crimes their fathers committed; this is not right. The feminists have the same tendency to attack my generation for the crimes committed by our fathers. They are the product of unhappy mothers that threw back their anger on their daughters.

When in a debate such as abortion, we still have old "Ass-holes" that take a decision, feminists don't understand that we (our generation) are the first to say the decision must and should come from women. But now with their "Men should do 50% of the upbringing of a child" theory, I don't understand why men should not be allowed 50% of the decision.

They (the feminists) are so stupid as to use arguments such as: For a same position, a woman is paid 20% less. My god! Such injustice if you don't add the good old: At the same position men hold 23% more experience. It feels right to me that a person that has been in a certain position 20 years is paid more than another that just came in.

If we truly analyze the feminist problem here, we find that during WWII, the woman force of Europe had to work and never truly went back to the household, this liberated women 40 years before us. Our women had to fight and won quite easily all they wanted. I for one will never discriminate. But my personal experience tells me that true feminists hate men. If I hire someone in my life, I will not choose a man before a woman but trust me, I will always choose a woman before a feminist.

I love women, everything about them is great, feminity is a quality I respect in a woman. I love their smell, their look, their intelligence.

Maybe my opinion is biased by the fact that I was always surrounded by intelligent feminine women that hated feminists themselves. Their opinion was that 20 years ago they battled for equality, now they battle for superiority.

It is my opinion and I want to share it!

BTW, did you notice Dave never wears a thing when he draws Jaka! Weird!

Alain Villeneuve

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

After having written that other letter, I have since purchased and read your 148th issue of *Cerebus*.

I can't think of any words now really—the customary clever banter seems vulgar or vain or—you know that in the past I have expressed praise for your work or some thanks for the feelings provoked, the catharsis or sympathism or—whatever. Dave, my father died 2 months ago. I was not there at his passing—it's an odd reconciliation to have to make – was here/is not here/is NOT, period. His absence still affects me at the most unexpected times—"something becomes GONE forever". If I'm rambling, maybe I'm still getting over it, but the point is—that last page really meant something to me. Don't know why, just evocative, I guess.

It's a good little thing you got going.

Al McCarty

★★★★★★★★★★

Mr. Sim:

Thomas Q. Radigan's letter in "Aardvark Comment" of issue 148 disturbed me. Today's media does tend to pick up and abandon its social causes with equal impunity. And, unfortunately, when the media abandons a cause for whatever reason the public often follows suit like a cheerfully ignorant puppy following his master. However, the fact that everyone else does it does not excuse those who should know better. There are still plenty of reasons to conserve oil, nuclear arms remain a threat in the hands of various nations with dubious intentions, and to dismiss AIDS out of hand seems patently ignorant. The destructive potential of AIDS goes far beyond that of any disease in my memory.

For my two cents on Quebec, when I was relatively young I once took a trip through Quebec. All I remember from that trip is how frustrating it was to not be able to read anything and how stuck up it seemed to me, even at my age then. All the rest of Canada had bilingual signs and yet Quebec, the ones for whom all those signs were bilingual, didn't consider the rest of their country worthy enough to reciprocate the favor. But then its not my country so maybe it's none of my business.

I'm enjoying your efforts on *Melmoth*. Keep it up.

Sincerely,

Nick Arvin
Rm. 3618–2 Bursley-Lewis
1931 Duffield
Ann Arbor, MI
USA 48109

★★★★★★★★★★

Dave,

Could I respond to M'Oak's letter from 147? Actually, I'm asking myself that question because at this point the answer is rather debatable. I would like to ask him some things, clarify some things and generally talk about what he said, but then I start feeling like I'd be totally invading his privacy (he seemed to be writing to the Lettercol Boys Club) . . . nevertheless many would agree his missive was courageously undertaken; I think I understand his impulse to write it and imagine it must have been amazingly cathartic—but then, I can't possibly understand, since I am female and there can be no true communication . . .

I hate this divisiveness!

It seems unjust that we have to be so opposed. It's evolution, see—in early life-forms there was no sexual differentiation, but when some gametes began to show tendencies of providing extra nutrition for the developing embryo (the eggs), there was a counterstrategy in the works: produce more gametes and make them faster (the sperm). Because natural selection favored organisms that made these 2 strategies work for the survival of the next generation, we have a lot of shit happening in everyone's lives. The genetically successful trait for a male to have is to impregnate as many females as possible with the least risk to himself and the least amount of commitment. Because this strategy leaves the female with offspring to bring up on her own, the best thing a female can do for her genes is to somehow ensure that the male will stick around and contribute to the care of those offspring. Thus, if you ignore all *social* barriers we are still absolutely genetically opposed. (You don't have to personally care about passing on your genes—heck, I don't—to realize that natural selection will promote genes that ensure their own survival and weed out those that aren't beneficial to reproductive behavior).

This is why when M'Oak talks about things being "natural" I get wary. There doesn't have to be such a thing as evil—but you can't say that something is not evil because it is natural. Where's your definition of evil? The woman on your talk show who shared her tips on manipulating men—her behavior is *absolutely natural*. Genetically. You see that sort of manipulation in the animal kingdom all the time. It doesn't mean it's right.

Moral values of right and wrong come from sources outside nature, unless you want to be another machine in the genetic pool. That's what religion is for. Nature tells us to do anything to ensure our own survival; morals tell us to have compassion for others and sacrifice ourselves. Most religions will eventually tell you that—stop caring about the material world, stop caring about your body. For instance it was completely unnatural for Jesus to voluntarily give up his life, yet he's been called the son of God.

Figures like Sauron and Vader strove for material power, mercilessly subjugating others for their own gain, which is perfectly natural, and for that reason simple. The reason M'Oak wants to make the question more complicated (I'm supposing) is that he wants to justify his actions (or rather, what almost were his actions) and he doesn't want to see himself as a bad person. Well c'mon, M'Oak, you're not, and that's the point. You're *not* because a) you're worried about it. "Those who fully experience depression, doubt, confusion, and despair may be infinitely more healthy than those who are generally certain, complacent, and self-satisfied." (M. Scott Pock, M.D.) b) you didn't do it. Something kept you back. c) you were relieved that "the logical half won."

Okay, I don't "know what it's like to have a hard-on." Obviously. That doesn't prohibit me from understanding that it was a matter of self-control. Love is sacrificial, while lust is self-servicing. Nobody ever said life was easy (except John Lennon, but I'm not sure how that fits in with this discussion.) No matter what aspect of life you're dealing with, spiritual questions are gonna smack you in the face.

Good luck, man—I'll see you in heaven.

Sincerity,

Amy

P.S. I'm sorry to bring this up, but you spelled "Mordor" wrong. I really don't like to pick because on the whole your letter was admirable—I guess it just triggers the reaction I have when Robert Plant sings "Golluf and the Evil One" and he clearly has no idea what he's talking about. Yours was probably a typo so never mind. Forget I said it.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

I just picked up *Cerebus* #148 this week, (fantastic cover!) as well as *True North 2*, (with an equally as fantastic cover!). Hey everybody! Dave Sim cares!! Looking at the cover answers one big question a lot of us have. "What are you doing after #300?" I know! I know! Dave Sim will go on to become the greatest political satirist that Canada has ever known. Am I close?

Anyway, I want to make a suggestion for those of you out there complaining about the letters page. Try this it might make it more interesting for you. 1) Read all letters written by people from your home town or province. 2) Read all letters written by males with one syllable first names next. 3) Then read letters written by females cutting down males. 4) Finally, read any remaining letters. It's fun, it's exciting and it's relatively inexpensive.

Cerebus #148 struck a chord with me Dave because this particular segment hits close to home. My grandfather died of cancer in a manner quite similar to Oscar. I watch a jovial, fat old friend wither away until I felt I no longer knew him. The way you have depicted Oscar's decline achieves a level of near perfect accuracy. This is the real thing folks. This is art.

A Canadian fan,

Glen Kuhn
R.R.#3, Prince Albert, Sask.
S6V 5R1

P.S. Fight the fight. Support CLLDF with your dollars, people!

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

The other day I went to McDonald's, and ordered a six pack of Chicken McNuggets. But when I went to eat them I discovered that they'd given me seven McNuggets.

That night I was at a movie, and when it ended, the guy sitting in front of me turned around, saw my Jaka's Story t-shirt , and remarked that he had one, too. He then said that he was the Ron in M'Oak's letter about going to McDonald's.

I think that this is a sign that you should strike a deal with McDonald's to get them to sell little, plastic Cerebus toys.

Strawberry Jam Forever,

Paul Stockton
5334 Yonge Street, Suite 120
Willowdale, Ontario
M2N 6M2

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

Are you a victim of junk mail? Does your name get bandied about on the mailing lists of corporate hucksters and slick professional "charity" merchants? Have you ever tried to get your name removed from one of these lists? (I can assure you that it is a futile task). Only one solution remains, **all-out retaliation.**

Beginning today, I have resolved to strike back at corporate junk mail pushers by mailing back their pre-postage paid envelopes empty or, time permitting, with a suitably insulting note. To be sure, this is a small measure, but it could be effective if adopted by enough like-minded people. Over the short term this policy could delay postage price increases for legitimate mail users (like you and me) by creating profits for Canada Post, while in the long term it may improve the quality of life in North America for both people and trees by ridding us of junk mail forever. In any event, these pin pricking Fabian tactics will justly penalize the daily corporate invasion of private life. Trying to make a difference in our mass society, I remain,

Sincerely yours,

The Mail Avenger
Calgary, AB

P.S. Congrats on reaching #150 and bravo for your insightful summation of Oscar Wilde's accomplishments.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave:

I hate to start off any letter with trite rubbish like "I've never written to a comic book before . . ." but just to irritate myself, I'm going to do it anyway. I think the main reason I've never written is that I've never managed to find a book that plays with my mind like *Cerebus* does. However, being the long-winded person that I am, I should probably start at the beginning.

I met a good friend of mine for the first time about two years ago (and subsequently remet him several times, which is what prompted us to be friends . . . something along the lines of "Look . . . this is the umpty-umpth time I've been introduced to you, I think this should be telling us something, how about you?"), and one of the similarities between us was our somewhat obsessive devotion (or would it be more accurate to say psychotic addiction) to illustrated literature. He raved about *Lone Wolf and Cub* and I about . . . well, let us say that after reading some of your letters pages, I'm somewhat embarrassed to admit what it was that I raved about. Nevertheless, I also listened to him spew for hours on *Moonshadow* and *Sandman* and something I had seen a few times before about a little gray aardvark named after the three headed guardian dog of Hades (in some sources it is Cerebus, and in others it is Cerberus . . . I wonder which one it was to the Greeks).

Being somewhat strapped for cash (as most lazy college students are, and even quite a few unlazy ones), I never bothered to find out what it was he was raving about. Then, after being friends for two months or so, he bopped off to England for four months, leaving me to my own somewhat less interesting devices here. Then he came back for a day or two and went back to Milwaukee, and then *I* went to England for nine months. Then I came back here and he went back to Milwaukee again. Suffice it to say that we get along very well and have never fought . . . mostly because we never see each other, I would think . . .

Anyhow . . . while I was in England, he made me a deal. He'd start reading some of the *X* . . . um . . . some of the books I read if I would pick up *Cerebus*. I thought I was getting the better deal. "After all," I grinned to myself, "There's only one *Cerebus* and about a gajillion *X* . . . er . . . of mine."

I'd like to take this opportunity to call my friend (Hi Andy!), a heartless bastard.

I flipped through a copy of *Melmoth* at his place and really paid little attention to it. As far as I could see, it was like reading a Clive Barker book backwards in the dark with your eyes closed. However, last weekend he called and the deal came up and I (somewhat reluctantly) went over to a place called Dreamhaven and picked up Phone

Book #1 to read. That was Sunday.

Monday I finished it.

Tuesday, I called AV to order *High Society*.

Wednesday I went back to Dreamhaven to see if I could get all of *Melmoth*. I got 2–4 and 6–9.

Yesterday I went to about two or three other places to see if I could find 0–1 and 5. I managed to find 5, but 0 and 1 were both still missing. To console myself I bought bits of the *Jaka Story* (#s 13–15 and 23).

Today I managed to find 17–19 and 21–22 of *Jaka* and I am in the process of tracking down #20.

I'm hooked.

I don't know if our deal will pan out on his end though. After going through the death of Oscar Wilde (whom I was coincidentally heavily introduced to this year at school in England), it makes what I read (yes . . . I'm going to continue with the *X* . . . um . . . those other books. They may be to comic books what Harlequin romances are to classical literature, but even Harlequin romances have their place, so I've been told. Apparently, from what I've been told by various people (Hi Andy!), they're a little more accurate than manuals on ice breaking, and if you are as terminally shy as I am, you need all the help you can get . . .) seem pretty juvenile by comparison. Besides . . . being a manic obsessive-compulsive collector won't vanish overnight.

Anyhow, besides finding a tombstone marked RIP (Reading In Poverty), I'm going to remain a manic fan for a while. I'm finding bits and pieces of old stories as I dig into what Minneapolis has to offer in the back issues department. I'll keep picking up Phone Books because I want to know what's going on RIGHT NOW (hedonism holds little credence with the credo "Patience is a virtue"), but for some reason, I want the little gray guy's stuff in its original form as well. *sigh* I hope I DO make it big in acting . . . I'll need the money to keep up with my hobby. However, what is a hobby for but to make you poor?

Two final things, and then I'll let you get back to something more important than my ramblings. Should this letter manage to net me a personal reply (even if it is only a "You babble too much. Shut up."), I'd like to ask for a silly favor. Y'see, I'm going back to England, and there's a girl there that I think I might just possibly be in love with. I honestly have no clue as to whether or not she loves me, but I know that when I look into her wrongly colored eyes, she does feel something for me. However, there are cultural barriers that I'm patiently trying to dig my way through. A picture (even in silhouette) of Cerebus and Jaka holding hands would be a godsend.

The second thing is a plug for a nameless friend of mine (Hi Andy!). Recently, a friend of his showed him a photo of a girl from out east somewheres. It was of a redhead sitting on a step reading a copy of Cerebus. I forget what he told me her first name was, but the last name was "Greenleaf." If you're still there, he'd like to meet you. Write to me and I'll pass the address on to him.

I'm off, then. Until swords part, may the Roach be with you.

Your fana(ddict)tic

The Albino
4025 Shamrock Drive
Minneapolis, MN
USA 55421

★★★★★★★★★★

Re: Imbalance of whining to happy letters in Aardvark Comment

Dear Mr. Sim:

In accordance with what's left of affirmative action, I'm afraid to say that I must ask you to print at least ONE (1) bright 'n' sunny letter about somebody's personal life or I'll sic a team of rabid lawyers on you. In case you do not receive one (1) during the month of August, I enclose a sample of one (1) said happy personal letter for you to print.

Dear Dave:

I'm so happy to be alive. Unlike the rest of the people in your letters columns, I have never raped anyone, considered raping anyone, nor been raped. I have good parents who like me.

I have a girlfriend, who is rather attractive and as far as I can tell has no ideas about leaving me. However, even though she is my girlfriend and I love her deeply, I do *not* have to sit by the phone pitifully, panting hoarsely with anticipation until she calls me. We are two separate people who complement each other, not one person who acts as a support pillar for the other's emotional esteem. This is a good relationship.

I work in a bookstore. I have two separate offers of management coming, plus a third from still another bookstore. Work is, in general, enjoyable. I have just found out that, even though technically I flunked out last semester, because of my inspired writing on the school newspaper I have been allowed to continue as a "specialty case". This is also good.

I have taken a course (the Forum) and realized that I have to get my life together, schoolwise. So I am. This is very good.

I write, and have just passed the 40,000 word mark on my first novel. My creative juices are flowing. For those bad times, I have a belief in a Supreme Creator to pull me through, even though I am not a Jeezofreak and do not believe in interfering in other people's lifestyles. Life is good.

My only problem is a certain smugness, but perhaps if people would stop using Dave's column as a cryrag I could manage to stop that.

Thank you.

Sim-cerely,

William Thomas Steinmetz
67 Clinton Avenue
Norwalk, CT
USA 06854

★★★★★★★★★★

Mr Sim:

I thought that I would take the time to write to "Aardvark Comment" to applaud the many fine readers who have penned their thoughts for all of us to see. To the point: I believe that no magazine letter column (you can put that "no" in caps, bold, understrike, italics, whatever) has better closing lines than are found in *Cerebus'* own "Aardvark Comment." Readers are continually treated to such gems as "Outbound and Outraged," "Love and Kisses," and "Never turn your back on a penguin."

When I read such profoundity my glazed eyes wander to the neat margins as I wonder: "Am I in heaven, or still on earth?"

Moreover, no "Still Reading" is left untempered by a solemn and sobering "Sincerely." There exists a perfect, exquisite balance between the varied responses; they fit like petals on a morning lily.

In what other periodical can one find in a single issue such delightful valedictions in such delicate and beauteous complement as:

"Keep the faith" to "Peace and light" to "Most sincerely" to "Voraciously" to "Bye for now" to "Metaphors be with you" to the indomitable "Shalom"?

Mr. Sim and all the silent multitudes of *Cerebus* readers the world over, I shout with joy and rapture:

Shalom!

Benjamin John Sisario (aka "the Secret Sharer")

319 Wren Street
Scotia, NA
USA 12302

P.S. I refuse to write a PS because they are usually so boring.

PPS See what I mean? (I am a victim to statistics.)

★★★★★★★★★★

Dave,

During the Sixties and early Seventies, the comics medium seemed to enjoy a high point which, in spite of people like Gulacy and Windsor-Smith, it took a couple of decades to reach again.

Since then, Manning and Crandall began pushing up daisies, Wood decided to check out ballistics, Foster sailed off to the Hall of Ancestors, Capp left to find his other leg, and Kelly went to his reward.

Now, Adams spends most of his time behind the scenes. Williamson is inking house-style pencillers. Torres is trying to out-Drucker Drucker. McWilliams seems to have completely disappeared. Starr could be doing his best to salvage a bad situation after the untimely discontinuation of one of the pinnacles of comic strip creativity, "On Stage".

Morrow, whose brilliant combinations of coloured inks, pencil crayons, watercolours, and incredibly realistic rendering once sent pulses racing, is probably painting backgrounds for Marvel teevee cartoon shows again.

The lack of acceptance of the thoughtful and personal "Mr. A" seems to have sent Ditko into a decades-long tail spin, at least as far as his published work is concerned. (Of course, my friends and I, and probably many others, still like to imagine that he's constantly building a secret portfolio of carefully-rendered drawings of ol' Spidey!)

All this is why it's such a joy to witness the emergence of people like Colin Upton into the comics format, or the return of Russ Heath in graphic novel format. I could go on mentioning all the other wonderful recent developments that again thrill and inspire those of us who had once felt the old days were over, that we had no hope of ever again seeing something in the league of *Blazing Combat* or the early *Witzend*.

But there's a special quality in *Cerebus* that makes it truly outstanding. Our enjoyment comes from not only the labor and ingenuity you put into it, but the fact that it is periodical. We can look forward to a new sequence every month, just like in the old days with "Deadman" or "Prince Valiant".

It's this quality of anticipation that heightens our feeling of enrichment; things are current, we're living in the same culture, the same time, experiencing the same ups and downs as the creator. And in spite of our constantly-shifting circumstances, we can count on still being able to return to that special world, right on schedule.

It is the expressed desire of many of the most serious creators in this medium to generate the same wonderment they felt as children. This becomes progressively more difficult for a modern audience, since the presentation must include intellectually challenging content as well as emotionally satisfying delivery.

I have to admit that, upon seeing the ninth issue of *Melmoth*, an involuntary gasp of delight escaped me, and I was filled with the same glee as when, in a time so long ago it seems like another life, I first held a copy of *Superman Annual #1*. And that's saying something.

All the best,

Harris Pearson
308 Second Avenue
Ottawa, Ontario K1S 2J2

★★★★★★★★★★

Yo Dave —

Since I owe my acquaintance to the works of Robertson Davies to that plug for *Papers of Samuel Marchbanks* you made all those years ago, please accept this advance copy of his new novel as a small token.

I had the opportunity of seeing Davies lecture and read from *Lyre of Orpheus* a few years ago. It's an experience I can recommend highly.

Cerebus remains the only American comic consistantly worth reading. (Although it is time to change the copyright date in the indicia).

Cheers,

Chris Logan Edwards
Post Office Box 172
Lemoyne, PA
USA 17043

P.S. For the record, it's Richard Thompson, Siouxsie and the Banshees, Elvis Costello, Kate Bush, Joe Jackson, The Pretenders, and Pe Dannan (and Stan Rogers if he were still alive).

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Aardvark Comment,

I was irritated by Dave Auers' letter in #148. Here's why.

He equates experience of sex oppression and sex violence with being female. I am a living counter-example.

More importantly, he asserts that child-care is exclusively the domain of women. I disagree entirely. Kids, especially boys, need lots of care from adults of *both* sexes.

Yours very sincerely,

Sean Goldthorpe
221 Dames Road
Forest Gate
London E70EA

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

There are a few points in Ralph Mathieu's letter (#147) that need to be answered.

Firstly, Ralph, like so many other people, seems to have been sucked into the myth that great art only comes through suffering. Was Ralph serious about his ambition to be a starving artist? I know a lot of artists (like my family and all their friends, for a start). They're serious artists, highly respected, and many of them are making a good living off their art—not people just messing around on a "vanity press level". And the ambition of each and every one of these artists is *not* to starve. No one in their right mind wants to starve—which brings me onto madness, something else Ralph seems to think is pretty cool. *Wise up.* And as for this idea that madness leads to great art, I've known three mad artists. One was once regarded as one of New Zealand's finest artists; he hasn't done anything decent for maybe 10 years. One hit his wife on the head with a hammer causing her permanent brain damage; I don't know where he is now. And the one whose work I liked the best killed himself. It's really hard to paint once you're dead.

Secondly, Ralph wants to lead a "minimalistic existence" and a life of "voluntary simplicity". I always thought that a minimalistic existence means *not* having a swimming pool. My mistake.

Thirdly, Ralph seems to believe that New Zealand is one big happy commune. We're going through a recession/depression just like everyone else and there are no jobs, especially not in rural areas. There goes Ralph's idea of working in a "farm community". There must be farms in the USA where people like

Ralph can go to live out their dreams because *another* fucked-up neo-hippy wanna-be psychopath American is something we do not need.

But then . . . he wouldn't eat much . . . and when the U.S. tries to bring its nuclear warships back here we could flush all the American hippies out of the jungle with guns and dogs and use them as hostages . . . sure would increase our bargaining power . . .

Hey Ralph!

We're waiting for you.

Avril Siddell
27 Fairview Rd.
Mt. Eden, Auckland 3
New Zealand
(letters welcome)

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave:

You knew you'd get a lot of letters about this.

I consider myself to be a feminist. As you can imagine, most feminists hate me. I argue with them all the time, especially the ones who stand out on 6th Avenue and West 8th Street, trying to get people to sign petitions to ban pornography. Personally, I enjoy sex and pornography and I'm not going to buy into any one particular group's dogma no matter how well intentioned I or they may think they are. Happily, I can make up my own mind, and I do, and this bugs people. The majority of folks don't like free thinkers, as I'm sure you're already aware.

I was reading this M'Oak letter with particular interest. It was very well written and I was curious to see how it was going to end up. Glad to see he didn't rape this girl, and to tell you the truth, I don't think it would have gotten to that point. Because I think that if she had said no or put up a fight, he would have stopped. He thought he loved this girl and he wanted to have sex with her. That's a little different from rape. Not actually being a rapist, I wouldn't know first hand, but from what I've heard, most men rape out of violence, not out of sexual frustration. They do not rape women who they know and find attractive; they rape women who they see walking down the street or in a parking lot or whatever who they've never seen before. Now if we're talking about "date rape", well, I think that's a different story and perhaps someone should put another label on it.

One of the things that frightened me about this letter was how close it was to that feminist bullshit that says "porn" causes men to rape. "Only she could have taken something as cute as Disney and make it look so sexy." He's driven to rape by what she wears. "And how I loved her shoulders . . . the skin was sculpted so beautifully." He's driven to rape because he finds her attractive. The Islamic religion, which many westerners find to be absurdist, reactionary and backwards, teaches that women must be covered from head to toe, that they must walk behind men, because their physical presence is too distractive. A rape victim who dresses provocatively is thought by many to be "asking for it". M'Oak's letter seems to contend just this. "Rape is the normal male setting". By this line of reasoning, any male who finds me attractive has the right, as a penis holder, to rape me. M'Oak (and anyone else listening), my body is my own and if you insist on sticking something in me uninvited, I'll have to do the same to you. Sorry. Self-defense is a natural reaction to assault.

An overwhelming desire to have sex with someone is not unnatural. I think we've all felt that. Rape fantasies are not unusual. However, forcing yourself on another person is wrong. That's not political correctness, that's common sense.

But what really bugged me about this particular letter was when he called the woman who was instructing other women on how to seduce men as "evil". If the rapist is not evil, how can he put a value judgement like "evil" on this woman? Please don't get me wrong. I'm not saying that I agree with this sort of thing. I think that it's wrong to manipulate someone into doing something that they don't want to do. That's my personal opinion. I think the woman who does this is on par with a man who does a similar thing—a man is not exempt because he can get a hard on. Forcing a man into marriage is, to me, on par with forcing a woman to have intercourse. But, damn you guys, you can't tell me that rape is justifiable because you have a penis! You may as well be cave men.

(Continued on next page)

So, uh, Dave, I'm a little short on cash right now. If I promise to give you the best blow job of your life, do you think we can get married and you can support me for the rest of my natural life?

Just asking.

Also, I kind of admire your lack of PCness, even if I disagree with some of it.

Connie
JAF Box 8274
New York, New York
USA 10116

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

I'm fairly new, as *Cerebus* fans go, having had my arm twisted to read #77. It was very strange to me then, and I might not have pursued it any further, except for the page with Jaka. I didn't know who she, or anyone was, except for *Cerebus* and the guy who looked like Groucho Marx. But there was something about her . . .

So I went out and bought *Swords of Cerebus*, so that I could start sensibly at the beginning. It turned out also to be the beginning of about 2 years of back issue collecting. It was worth it. I finally got the drift of this strange land in which *Cerebus* wandered.

You are a damn good storyteller. I know you tend to favor rock music, judging from occasional comments, Aardvark, or otherwise, but perhaps you've heard of Harry Chapin. He was a man who, like you, told a story his own way, and no apologies about it. Sadly, he never got to see *Church and State*, or *Jaka's Story*, or I could imagine him saying, "Thank God, someone whose stories are longer than mine!" I hope you will consider that a compliment, as I love a good, long story.

Recently, I reread *Cerebus* from Page 1 all the way through the latest issue of *Melmoth*. I was thunderstruck by the way that each individual issue blended smoothly into a complete story. Just for comparison, I pulled out other titles for comparison, like *Batman*, *Teen Titans*, *X-Men*, and *Spiderman*. The only one that even came close to your sense of true continuity was the *X-Men*, and that's only because Claremont has been writing the damn thing forever. Even then, I'm sick of the way everybody plays "artist of the week". It's a relief to know that *Cerebus* is consistent in these matters. You do most of it, Gerhard puts a fine polish on it, and the local package store delivery guy gets a hernia.

I've been collecting (and reading, all you Todd McFarlane artwork hoarders) comics for two decades, I've managed a comic book store (please stow the "specialty shop" bullshit), and I've recently had my first professional story published by Innovation. This means that I've read a lot of comics, some great, some trash, and a lot of mediocre stuff in between. When I was a manager, I even made a point of reading every book that came in, so I would be able to give advice or comments where needed. Some books I almost asked customers not to buy, they were so bad. Occasionally a worried mom or dad would ask me if their 12 year old kid should read *Swamp Thing*. But in all that time, there's only one regular book I really pushed to customers. *Cerebus*. I had read that distributors and managers weren't supporting your efforts, which I thought was crazy, since if it sells, everybody makes more money, and I'd rather sell *Cerebus* than *Secret Wars xxxxviii* any day. I would discuss it, show it to customers, even got to where we'd read it out loud, just for fun in the store. Well, I didn't help you break any sales records, but my conscience is clean. I think your book deserves more attention from fans and pros alike. I'm not talking about various controversies, I mean the story of *Cerebus* the Aardvark, the earth-pig born!

I've been keeping up with the letter columns and while eclectic is nice, let's not forget why we're here. Because you put your Aardvark where your mouth is (hell of an image, huh?), and committed yourself to putting up with all kinds of aggravation, including long-winded letters like mine, to put out a high-quality story.

You have also made me brush up on political science, theology, history, Oscar Wilde, the Marx Brothers, and Foghorn Leghorn. I can't get over how you blend drama, satire and off-the-wall lunacy into a very powerful story.

And, damn it, you can draw. I can't, no pity parties, I'm a writer, one who will be dependent upon the quality of the artist to make my work good or bad. I enjoy looking at your work as much as reading the story. It's beautiful, especially when Jaka's around. Then, I think you're at your best. Every time she shows up, I get the sniffles.

I've heard people comment that music goes well with *Cerebus*, but has anyone come up with themes for the characters? Well, guess what I did . . .

Weisshaupt — The 1812 Overture (the cannon were for his cultural improvement plan)

Astoria — The Bitch is Back — by Elton John — why not?

Oscar — The Dangling Conversation by Paul Simon — trust me, it fits

Bran — Where You Lead by Carol King — says it all . . .

Elrod — Merry-go-Round Broke Down-damned if I know who wrote it, but that's all Elrod deserves

Archbishop Posey-Amazing Grace — if there's anyone more wretched than him, then someone was sleeping where they shouldn't.

The Judge — Pomp and Circumstance — somehow, "We Built This City" doesn't fit.

Mick/Keef — They've got their own theme music—why mess with success?

The McGrew Brothers — The Dukes of Hazard Theme

The Bug — Still Crazy After All These Years by Paul Simon

Elf — I Can Fly from Peter Pan

Boobah — Food, Glorious Food from Oliver

Lord Julius — Clair de Lune— just so he can have fun with the title.

Bishop Powers — Darth Vader's theme by John Williams — who else can walk that loud?

Jaka — A Better Place to Be by Harry Chapin — because that's what she's looking for.

Cerebus — The Parade's Still Passing by Harry Chapin — could've been written for him

I expect I'll take a few potshots from someone about this, but hey, it's not like I chiseled this in granite, it's for fun.

It all really boils down to my saying thank you for letting us sit awhile and let you spin your yarn. Sometimes, when I finish an issue, I'll remember a line from a song by Gordon Lighfoot called Minstrel of the Dawn,

The Minstrel of the Dawn is gone.
I hope he's back before too long.
And if you see him, you must be
The victim of his minstrelsy.
He'll sing for you his song.
The Minstrel of the Dawn.

So, Dave when the bullshit overwhelms you, pick up a pen and brush, and sing. We'll be listening.

Until whenever,

Michael Buckley
411 N.E. 40th Terrace
Ocala, FL
USA 32670

★★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Messers Gerhard & Sim:

Last Saturday night, when I reached page 25 of *Jaka's Story,* I realized that the stuffed doll Cerebus has clutched in his left hand all through the early issues of *Melmoth* is really Jaka's doll Missy. I knew then I was in for an emotional experience rare in comics. Thank you for an emotional experience rare in comics. Thank you both so much. It's amazing to see a creative team consistently growing better, technically, at making masterpieces, while digging deeper into the possibilities of the medium.

About ten years ago, I actually owned copies of *Mad Man's Drum* and *The Devil's Brush,* Lynd Ward's novels in woodcut. *Jaka's Story* is the first thing I've seen since those that really deserves to be called a Graphic Novel.

I am currently climbing out of a huge economic black hole, and could afford only one of the three compilation volumes I haven't read yet. I think I made the right choice, but I'll wait a month, by which time I should have those two volumes of *Church and State,* before even thinking of talking about *Cerebus* in *b & w* (which is pronounced "blackandwhite"!)

As general comic readers go, I'm old. I can remember buying the origin-issue of *The Flash.* I remember the splash-page of *The Green Lama.* I remember *Supersnipe* and *Crimebuster.* I spent my college years writing a critical comment-letter to Bill Gaines about every issue of E.C. comics. And when Ted E. White all too briefly became editor of *Heavy Metal,* on a whim he gave me a "free lifetime subscription" which follows me wherever I go no matter what I do. And in my experience, although there are a lot of comics published today, (and many of the most popular are dreadful) I think the best comics are better today than comics have ever been before. And *Cerebus* leads the pack. When that pack includes *The Sandman, The Puma Blues,* and *The Books of Magic,* that's something to be proud of.

I started *b & w* to try to give back something to the artists and writers who give me so very much. I think creative artists always give much more than they ever get paid for. I'd like to let them know there is at least one pair of appreciative eyeballs running over their work, often again and again. That's really all I can give back.

I was saddened when a very appreciative dealer at a comics fair here told me that as *Cerebus* took on more and more serious material, sales dropped and back-issue prices fell. Getting better and better at what you do should be rewarded, somehow, not penalized. I get incensed when people admit to preferring "the older, funnier ones," in Woody Allen's phrase.

And I'm surprised people don't see the expanded letters column for what it is: a genuine dialogue between the work of art and its audience, with the wide world of real experience as the subject of both elements. Others keep such honest letters as "personal communication" instead of publishing them, because they are thought "not relevant" to the story. But I think the best proof that comics can be works of literary value is the kind of minds that have responded to *The Question, The Sandman,* and *Cerebus.* When you take something trivial and make it sing, as Hal Foster did, more than merely trivial minds tend to take notice. Besides, there are more things on your mind than shameless, inarticulate adulation, aren't there?

The apocryphal second issue of *b & w* will finally get printed next month, and the fabled fourth issue will be all the letters the first three have generated, uncut and unedited. If you're moved to respond, feel free.

Love,

Larry Stark

And the inevitable P.S.: My computer ate the first two final drafts of this. And I'm sure only the readers of *Cerebus* would recognize a Sisyphean Situation when they see one!

★★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave:

I am writing this letter in response to a letter by "M'Oak" which appeared in *Cerebus* #147. I believe that, like M'Oak's letter, I have some comments that apply to his situation, and to the issue of rape in general.

M'Oak tells a story of a time when he and a female camp counselor, for whom he felt a great sexual attraction, were together on an overnight. Despite his attraction, he never expressed his feelings to this counselor, and yet kept placing himself in situations in which his closeness to her would further arouse feelings which he could not or would not express. One of his reasons for not saying anything is that she had spoken highly of another man, leading to the conclusion that she was in love with him and that therefore there was no use expressing his own feelings. The result was, in his words, "a buildup of hormones" that very nearly overwhelmed reason and caused him to lose control and assault her.

I draw two conclusions from his story.

My first conclusion is that M'Oak should have made a sincere but courteous pass at the girl he desired, regardless of this other guy. All M'Oak says is that she had spoken highly of him—not that there was any relationship. She could, in fact, have been in the same position with him as M'Oak was with her. Furthermore, it seems to me that she was going out of her way to be with M'Oak, and to get his attention: letting him sit next to her, wearing the "Yours to Discover" licence plate, talking about her wild habits, joining him at the campfire with the kids, and even huddling with him under a blanket. The fact that M'Oak was getting near her so often could not have escaped her attention.

If M'Oak had expressed his feelings toward her, one of two things would have happened: either she would have said "yes," which was what he wanted; or she would have realized what feelings she was unintentionally arousing, said "no," and moved away from him. Either way, matters would have been set straight between them, and the overwhelming desire that nearly caused a sexual assault would have been fulfilled or put down by force of reality. Of course, M'Oak might have caused offense, but that is an inevitable risk, and a small price to pay, given that he clearly had nothing to lose.

M'Oak's experience is relevant in my life. I have lost count of the times when I have met a woman, enjoyed her company, got the distinct impression that she enjoyed mine, and was still too shy to make a pass at her. The result each time is that I look back on our time together, reassess her words and body language and think, rightly or wrongly, "Goddamn, I should have said something!" (The other result is that my sex life is a joke.) Life is too short for such hesitancy followed by guilt and self-flagellation, and I

for one am tired of it.

My second conclusion is that a man's unwillingness or inability to express his sexual desires is just as much a factor in rape as the desires themselves. I am not a psychologist, criminologist or sexual assault expert, but it is my opinion that many if not most rapes occur in situations similar to M'Oak's: the man desires the woman, but does not know how to express it, or is too shy or otherwise hung up; bottled-up or even unacknowledged feeling causes frustration and anger, which in turn lead to violence. M'Oak, if you are reading this letter, heed my advice: rape is *not* something that just happens: it is caused, and it can be avoided. You, M'Oak, created the danger of rape by subjecting yourself, or allowing yourself to be subjected, to feelings which you then bottled up, allowing them to build almost to the breaking point.

One final word of advice, M'Oak: next time you must "relieve yourself," don't do it in a smelly outhouse. Masturbation may not be the highest form of human activity, but it is often necessary and proper, and should not be stripped of its dignity. Next time go into the woods and plant your seed in the Earth.

Yours with ache in groin,

"Fred"

★★★★★★★★★★

Dave,

I must make a brief response to J. Brant Dilworth's letter in issue 147 about the buttered toast and the cat.

Fine.

Will you now help me get my cat off the ceiling, you son of a bitch?!?

(Vulgarities are a true form of flattery.)

Sincerely,

Frank Mabee
1124 Kevin Road
Knoxville, TN
USA 37923

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

Warning! Chris Romano and all others who are tired of "she dumped me, Dave" letters can skip down to the next letter right now. No further warning will be given.

She dumped me, Dave. After the cruel event I came home and started to read the Aardvark Comments of the last four or five issues in an effort to keep my mind off her. The problem was that most of the letters were about women and in particular feminist women. You see my newly ex-girlfriend (or partner as we politically correct people like to say) is a feminist. Feminists have been under fire quite a bit lately in this letters column and you might think that I would be glad to jump on the bandvehicle due to my having been so badly (and recently) hurt by one. But my relationship with this amazing woman offered me a chance to try and understand what she and other feminists are trying to do and for that, I thank her.

It seems to me that men who say feminists are man-haters are being unfair because men have been woman-haters for centuries so who can begrudge women a little indulgence in name-calling and finger-pointing for a while. A common complaint among men is "don't take out your frustrations on me, babe, you've just been dating the wrong men". But men bad-mouth women all the time because one woman didn't show interest in them or because their heart was broken recently. Feminists are trying to improve the status of women (a noble task in my view) and they deal with violence against women a lot. They see the statistics, watch films, read about and talk to victims of violence and rape and they should be forgiven if this tends to affect their opinions of men. The tendency of feminists to fear and hate the opposite sex is not a failing unique to them but a human fallacy, one that has been too long fostered and encouraged in men. We are all susceptible to the evils of stereotyping and I think feminists definitely have more excuse to stereotype men as oppressors of women than men have to stereotype women as sex objects and inferior human beings.

What I am doing now is called appropriation. I'm talking about women as if I know what they feel and what they want. I am stealing their voice. Why listen to an angry feminist when you can feel good by agreeing with a white, heterosexual male, to whom most people are willing to give the benefit of the doubt? Men should listen to women and try not to steal their voice but in this imbalanced society it seems that men who need to change their attitudes might pay more attention to and have a harder time dismissing someone they have been conditioned to respect. Maybe I see myself as a bit of a fifth columnist but I do know that men have a lot of self-educating to do and that we can't take refuge in thinking that it's only other men who are responsible for the oppression of women.

I can name 50 male comic book writers and artists for every female one. So, come on guys stop acting so self-righteous, as if you were above human fallacies and cut the feminists some slack. I notice that there are few letters from women in this column and it seems to me that their voices would be a welcome break from all the "feminists are bitches from hell who can't get laid" letters that we've seen lately. I like to think I'm an open minded man who can deal with my heartbreak and not let my ideas about women change because I was hurt by one. There's a joke that says, behind every sensitive man there is an exhausted feminist. I just wish that mine were still there (or rather besides me). Unrequited love sure sucks.

Zeke Norton
2790 Norman Ave.
Coquitlam, British Columbia
V3C 2L4

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

Nicole called this morning.

Last night, some male friends and I went out and did something I hadn't done in a while. We got plowed. Played a 9-hole game of golf where each drink on each hole was worth a coupla strokes. More if you had beer. A hole-in-one if you downed a shot. We ran into some female friends at the 7th hole but they didn't stick with us for very long. Immature? Sophomoric? Sure. But, what the hell . . . at midnight it was my birthday.

This morning—early—the phone rang and from across the apartment, I heard Nicole's voice coming thru our machine. I don't know how I did it without killing someone (there were bodies everywhere) or seriously injuring myself but, somehow, I got to the phone before she hung up.

She's still in Thailand. She called to wish me a Happy Birthday. She says she's thin, tan, and blonder than she's been since high school.

Now I can tell every fucking person who keeps asking me, how she's doing.

She's doing fine.

Rob Lavender
Somewhere in the Northeast again

★★★★★★★★★★

MY ENCOUNTERS WITH DAVE SIM & CEREBUS

BY RANTZ '91

IN 1981 I WAS 12 YEARS OLD. IT WAS THEN THAT I SAW MY FIRST COPY OF CEREBUS IN A COMIC SHOP IN CLARKSTON, WA.

IT WAS ISSUE #31. I BOUGHT IT AT THE URGINGS OF THE SHOP OWNER, BUT I DIDN'T BUY ANY OF THE FOLLOWING ISSUES...

FROM TIME TO TIME I WOULD GLANCE THROUGH A COPY, NOT ENOUGH TO UNDERSTAND THE PLOT, BUT ENOUGH TO FIGURE OUT WHO DAVE SIM WAS.

IN 1986, I KINDA-SORTA WAS INVOLVED WITH A GIRL NAMED SIERRA LOUBERT.

WHEN I MENTIONED MY INTREST IN BEING A COMIC ARTIST, SHE CASUALLY BROUGHT UP THE FACT THAT HER UNCLE WAS A COMIC ARTIST...

...WHEN SAID UNCLE TURNED OUT TO BE DAVE SIM, AND HER AUNT DEBI LOUBERT, I HAD A HARD TIME MAINTAINING ANY COMPOSURE.

I WAS INTRODUCED TO DEBI WHEN SHE CAME TO VISIT THAT CHRISTMAS. (SHE AND DAVE HAD SPLIT BY THEN.) SHE SAID SHE WOULD TAKE A LOOK AT MY STUFF.

ALMOST A YEAR LATER, WHEN I SHOWED HER SOME OF MY WORK, SHE GAVE ME SOME GOOD ADVICE.

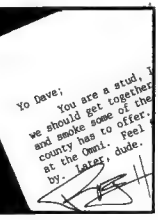
AFTER I DROPPED OUT OF ART SCHOOL IN LA, I STARTED TO PICK UP CEREBUS. DETERMINED TO STICK IT OUT FOR AT LEAST 10 ISSUES, I STARTED WITH #109.

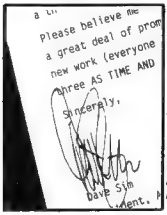
A LOCAL CEREBUS COLLECTOR, RANDY SARBACHER, HELPED ME WEND MY WAY THROUGH THE COMPLEX WORLD OF THE EARTH PAG. *

* SEE CEREBUS LETTER COL. #114

BEFORE THE 1986 SAN DIEGO COMIC-CON I WROTE DAVE A FAN-GEEKISH LETTER SAYING THAT, SINCE I WAS NOW A PRO, HE AND I SHOULD PARTY TOGETHER.

(DAVE MERCIFULLY NEVER REPLIED.)





I HAVE SUBMITTED 2 PREVIOUS 'SINGLE' PAGES, AND RECEIVED POLITE REJECTION NOTICES FOR BOTH OF THEM. UNDAUNTED, I AM PRODUCING MORE OF THEM.

AT THE '89 SAN DIEGO COMIC-CON I ROOMED WITH BILL LOEBS, WHO TOLD ME HIS STORIES ABOUT DAVE...

IT WAS ALSO AT SAN DIEGO THAT I WAS INTRODUCED TO DEREK McCULLOCH BY A MUTUAL FRIEND. (DEREK, DAVE BAUMAN & I ALL BELONG TO THE SAME PRO AAA)

IN FEB. '90 I CO-CHAIRED 'GRENDEL-CON.' IN THE HOPE OF FINALLY GETTING TO MEET DAVE, I INVITED HIM AND GER TO BE OUR GUESTS.

HE DECLINED DUE TO SCHEDULE. (DITTO, THIS YEAR'S CON.)

I AM NOW THE PROUD OWNER OF MOST OF THE BACK ISSUES.

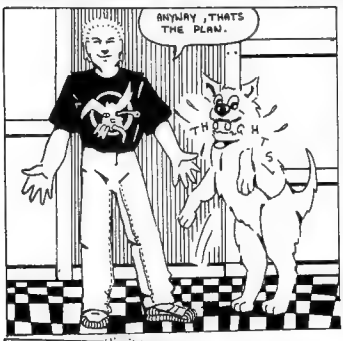
NEEDLESS TO SAY, I EAGERLY AWAIT EACH NEW ISSUE.

I'LL BE AT SAN DIEGO THIS YEAR, PUSHING MY 'URBAN ANGST' SERIES, CITY OF ANGELS.

DAVE WILL ALSO BE AT SAN DIEGO THIS YEAR. HOPEFULLY, I'LL FINALLY GET TO MEET HIM. (I JUST HOPE THAT HE DOESN'T REMEMBER THAT LETTER I SENT BACK IN 1988...)

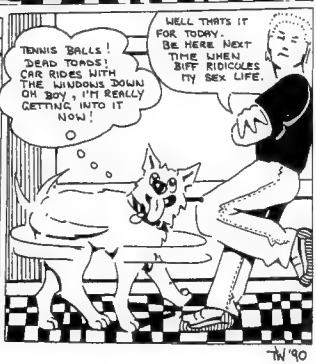
BIFF !

HI, I'M JACK AND THIS IS BIFF. WE'RE THE LATEST IN REJECTED FUNNY ANIMAL STRIPS THOUGHT UP BY THE CARTOONIST.
BUT WHAT THE HELL WE THOUGHT - WHY NOT GIVE IT A GO ANYWAY.
SO, I'LL ACT THE CONGENIAL FALL GUY AND BIFF HERE WILL INTERCEPT MY DIALOGUE WITH SARDONIC THOUGHT BALLOONS
THOUGHTS?


ANYWAY, THATS THE PLAN.
THOUGHTS

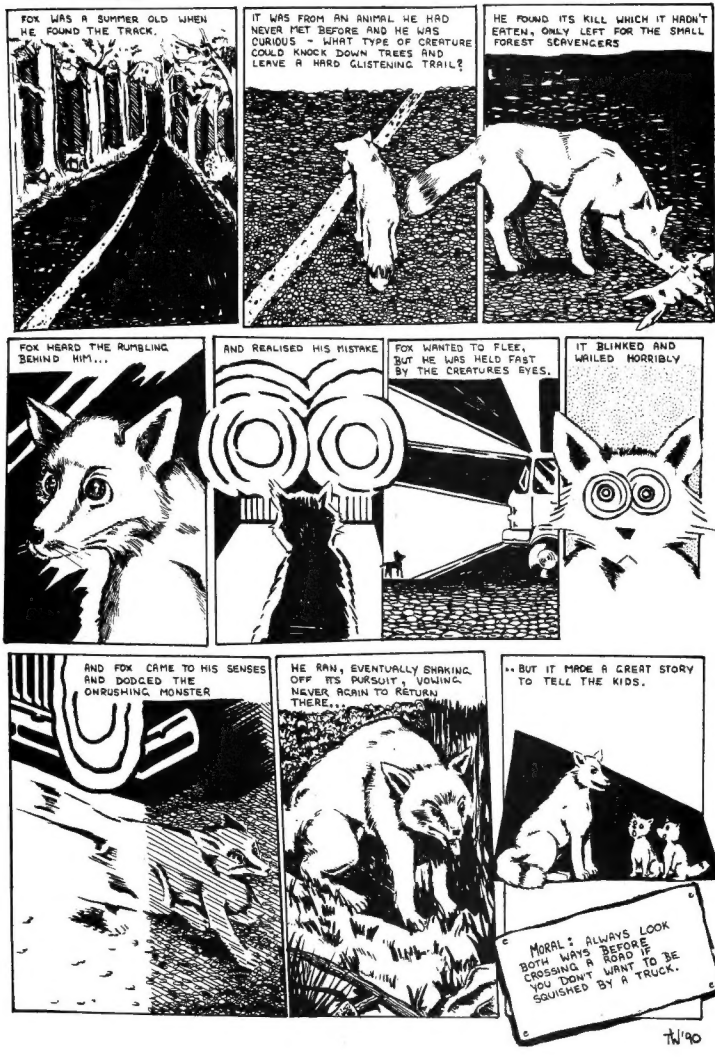
WELL BIFF, DO I LOOK READY TO GO ON NOW?
WOW JACK, LOOK, YOU CAN SEE MY THOUGHTS - HEY THIS IS GREAT, LETS RUN AROUND THE STREETS, URINATE ON LOTS OF TELEPHONE POLES AND BARK A LOT. IT'LL BE GREAT MUM, CAN WE, CAN WE

NO BIFF, THE REPLY HAS TO BE WITTY - THINK OF SOMETHING ELSE.
DOG FOOD! DOG FOOD IS ALWAYS A GOOD ONE. I LOVE DOG FOOD!


TENNIS BALLS! DEAD TOADS! CAR RIDES WITH THE WINDOWS DOWN OH BOY, I'M REALLY GETTING INTO IT NOW!
WELL THATS IT FOR TODAY. BE HERE NEXT TIME WHEN BIFF RIDICULES MY SEX LIFE.

TW '90

Fox Tales


FOX WAS A SUMMER OLD WHEN HE FOUND THE TRACK.
IT WAS FROM AN ANIMAL HE HAD NEVER MET BEFORE AND HE WAS CURIOUS - WHAT TYPE OF CREATURE COULD KNOCK DOWN TREES AND LEAVE A HARD GLISTENING TRAIL?
HE FOUND ITS KILL WHICH IT HADN'T EATEN, ONLY LEFT FOR THE SMALL FOREST SCAVENGERS
FOX HEARD THE RUMBLING BEHIND HIM...
AND REALISED HIS MISTAKE
FOX WANTED TO FLEE, BUT HE WAS HELD FAST BY THE CREATURES EYES.
IT BLINKED AND WAILED HORRIBLY
AND FOX CAME TO HIS SENSES AND DODGED THE ONRUSHING MONSTER
HE RAN, EVENTUALLY SHAKING OFF ITS PURSUIT, VOWING NEVER AGAIN TO RETURN THERE...
..BUT IT MADE A GREAT STORY TO TELL THE KIDS.
MORAL: ALWAYS LOOK BOTH WAYS BEFORE CROSSING A ROAD IF YOU DONT WANT TO BE SQUISHED BY A TRUCK.
TW'90

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